



**Northern Illinois District**  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

To the People of God of the LCMS Northern Illinois District,

“We are in this life and work together.” That is not by our choice, but by the gracious work of God. We confess with the Scripture, “*There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through call and in all*” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Isn’t that a rich blessing that the Lord gives us!

The problem is “the Devil, the world and our sinful nature.” The world struggles and fails God and so do we in the Church! We have sinned, we do sin, and we will sin! Racism, pride, and hatred are a sin wherever they are found!

Only Jesus can deliver us from the mess we have made in many ways including in our relationships with those different than us. He lived the perfect life for you in obedience to God and perfectly loved his neighbor for you! As we read this report, we look to Jesus, for help and hope and full redemption. Christ died, rose again from the dead, and will come again!

God has been at work, is at work, and will be at work among us! May the Holy Spirit grant us a better future!

We are in mission and ministry inside and outside the Church in great love for the people our Lord loves!

This report, titled, “Multiethnic Mission, Ministry, and Education in the Northern Illinois District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” is commended to you as mandated by the LCMS Northern Illinois District’s (NID) Convention held on March 11-12, 2022 in response to Resolution 3-03A. I would like to thank the whole Committee for their faithful work and commitment of time, especially the chair of the Committee, Rev. Dr. Chad Kendall, and a significant author of the report, Rev. Dr. Jacob Corzine. You will notice the Bible study as well. Short videos will follow in the spring of 2024.

You might remember that the convention had significant discussion on this resolution. This historical study also provides an opportunity for reflection as well as direction for the future. The answer is always repentance for all us sinners as well as ears, minds, hearts, and mouths ready for the forgiveness Jesus generously gives!

This could be a great resource for pastoral circuit meetings, educator conferences, congregational Bible studies, and individual reflection.

On behalf of the LCMS Northern Illinois District, I commend this work to your study, reflection, and discussion.

The people of God on earth and heaven are “*from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number*” (Revelation 7:9) and together we are all focused on the Victorious Lamb! Is not that a wondrous vision!

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Allan R. Buss, President, LCMS Northern Illinois District  
*With You, My Eyes are on Jesus, Hebrews 12:2-3*

Multiethnic Mission,  
Ministry, and Education  
in  
the Northern Illinois  
District of  
The Lutheran Church—  
Missouri Synod



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# INTRODUCTION

According to its mandate, the aim of this study is to focus on the Northern Illinois District's history of mission, ministry, and education within multiethnic communities. This statement of focus gives some direction but also leaves much open to a good-faith interpretation. On the one hand, we see three objects of focus: mission, ministry, and education. The first asks for an inquiry into which ethnic groups were targeted with evangelization in an effort to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost. We take the second to mean those efforts sometimes categorized as "social ministry"—the care for physical and psychological needs that may be met regardless of whether a person receives the message of forgiveness in Jesus Christ with faith. The third object of focus—education—could draw our study toward three main entities: the entire set of congregational schools within the District, the super-congregational schools (mainly high schools) serving the District, and Concordia University Chicago (as this institution has been known since 2006); but the individual histories of these many institutions constrain our ability to even attempt addressing them comprehensively. Instead, an effort has simply been made to mark trends and point toward possible further study. We have endeavored to address, in some form, all three aspects of the NID's history in this study.

But the resolution leaves the task force to infer exactly what lens to apply as we engage in the study. We resist the temptation to scour the source material for hints of possible unfair treatment directed toward ethnic groups, although our eyes are open to see these where they may be present. We are likewise determinedly skeptical of a story that forgets the sinfulness of the men and women who appear in it. The District's history is one of successes and failures—of great faithfulness to the Gospel and times of sinful shortcoming. To be more specific, the District's history is one story of the church responding to the events transpiring in the world around it, magnified by Chicago's prominent status as one of the largest cities in the United States. In these responses, we observe the work of the Holy Spirit alongside and, remarkably, amid human sinfulness. And in this observation, which grew from months of study of the source materials before any words were put to page, we find a lens that we believe is faithful to both the intention of the resolution and a biblically Christian and confessionally Lutheran understanding of history.

The following is organized chronologically. The different aspects of the NID's ministry (meant here in the broad sense, including mission, ministry, and education) have rarely received balanced emphasis and attention. Rather, at times, one or the other rose to be the main priority. As often as not, the priority actually appeared as a combination of two or all three aspects, such as when a school in Chicago's Ida B. Wells projects served as a foothold for mission and ministry there, or when the District's costly support of congregational schools was weighed against its support of evangelizing mission projects—considered as a decision between mission among children and mission among adults. Because of this intermingling of mission, ministry, and education, a tripartite structure would be difficult to accomplish without much repetition. A chronological approach allows those things to be highlighted that stand out in the sources at hand for the particular times.

The 118 years of NID history have been divided into five periods. The first periods are bounded by the dramatic influence of the Second World War on the American economy. Its effect basically defines the second chapter (The Turbulent War Years), so that the first (The Early Years) can be the time preceding that, and the third (Mid-Century) can commence when it was overcome. A second major event that dramatically influenced the District, and indeed, the whole LCMS, is the controversy surrounding Concordia Seminary in the early 1970s. It is for this reason that the third period in this study concludes in 1974. After this, however, it is the nature of the records, rather than their content, that gives structure because it affords the most consistency to what can be reported. Less and less of the story is available in the basic source for all of this work: the District's published convention proceedings. As already noted with respect to the schools, so also here: the more the work of the District becomes decentralized, the harder it becomes to tell a comprehensive and overarching story.

In each period, a general overview is also provided. This is not unimportant; at times, the reader will notice the failure to provide needed ministry (using the word here in its broad sense to refer to all the church's work) to a particular ethnic group, but these observations are always to be contextualized by the reality of limited resources and the knowledge of how those resources were being applied. Besides the overarching retelling of the history of the NID, the reader will find vignettes interspersed throughout the text. The goal of these sections is to dive deeper and tell interesting or important stories in more detail. With them, we aim neither to indict nor to exonerate the NID's historical attitudes toward ethnic groups, but instead to tell as representative a story as possible. That more could be written goes without saying, even though we will say it very clearly in some places. Even so, no amount of research can uncover the motives in the hearts of the people involved. For this reason, we invite the reader to read with charity—not so much toward us serving on the task force as toward the people who have featured in the Northern Illinois District's story.

## Sources

Beyond any doubt, the most comprehensive primary source for this study is constituted by the published proceedings of the NID conventions, going back to the first convention in 1906. The proceedings contain a record of the actions of the District as a unified body of congregations. Besides this, these published proceedings record much of what was occurring in the congregations and ministries of the District, although the details are often lacking.<sup>1</sup> Besides this main source, two other types of primary sources are drawn from in the study: (1) those external to the District, such as the published proceedings and magazines and newsletters of the Synodical Conference or The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod; and (2) those not only internal to the District but particular to its congregations or institutions. These are often unpublished documents, which lead

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<sup>1</sup> A second major source would have been the published newsletter of the District, called (following its translation into English) the *Northern Illinois Messenger* and then the *Northern Light*. It proved difficult, however, to gain adequate access to this resource. Pieces of it are scattered across libraries and archives geographically quite far apart from one another and the task force members.

to problems exacerbated by these kinds of sources: they are hard to come by, they tend to be incomplete, and they represent relatively little uniformity as one moves through the years from congregation to congregation or institution to institution. This not only inhibits the certainty with which assertions can be made but it also makes the study of the materials cumbersome. All this is to say we have put forth our best effort in preparing this study, but it ought not be confused with an academically rigorous collection and evaluation of all technically available source material.

## THE EARLY YEARS (1906–1929)

### Introduction and Main Emphases

The NID formed in 1906 as a result of the division of the Illinois District's three geographic regions. By no means, therefore, did its first convention constitute any kind of "beginning." It is rather the case that the District's beginnings represent a collection of continuations. The District continued its support of a variety of non-German, ethnic Lutheran churches;

its work seeking out German Lutheran immigrant communities and planting congregations within its geographical boundaries;

its financial support of the Synodical Conference's mission in the African American community; and

its support of the Addison Teachers Seminary.

All this and much more can be drawn from the treasurer's report recorded in the first NID convention's minutes.<sup>2</sup> The major line items potentially related to our three areas of interest are the following:

- Orphanages and Other Institutions of Well-Being (8 percent of the NID budget)
- Black Mission (4 percent)
- Brazilian Mission (4 percent)
- Chicago City Mission (4 percent)
- Deaf Mission and Ministry Support (2 percent)
- General Mission (1 percent)

These items accounted for about 25 percent of the District's budget, and other smaller line items tipped the scale beyond that mark. Essential to note here is that the District has, from its very first year, a *history of multiethnic mission, ministry, and education*. The support of black missions will form an important part of this report. The Brazilian mis-

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<sup>2</sup> Northern Illinois District (NID) Proceedings, 1909, 96.

sion must be duly noted but also regarded primarily as the work of the synod. Other items will be addressed as sources have permitted.

## Support of Synodical Conference Black Ministry

The beginnings of the Northern Illinois District’s mission efforts in the African American community are found in its support of the black mission of the Synodical Conference. The Synodical Conference was an association of confessionally committed American Lutheran synods that existed from 1872 until 1967. Its main members were, besides the LCMS, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A persistent prioritization of true doctrine, expressed in unqualified (*quia*) adherence to the Lutheran Confessions, both united the synods of the Synodical Conference and distinguished them from others who bore the name *Lutheran* but with a less robust anchoring in the Lutheran Confessions. Their unity established, they set mission work among African Americans as their main task. The Synodical Conference established a mission board in 1872 and quickly began the work both of searching for missionary candidates and exploring those regions where they might be sent.<sup>3</sup> Those regions were all initially in southern states, and it would be decades before the combination of necessity and available resources would bring this mission work to Chicago.<sup>4</sup>

We note the approximately thirty-five years between the establishment of the Synodical Conference Mission Board and the founding of the NID. At that point, it could not yet be clear to what degree Chicago would rise as a numerical center of the African American community, but the newly formed District did not take long to notice the rising need. Regular reports on the work of the Synodical Conference are present in the proceedings of early District conventions. In 1921, the proceedings note the absence of a black missions in Chicago. The work, however, is not seen as the responsibility of the District. Rather, its absence is explained by the amount of work the mission board of the Synodical Conference is doing among black people in other areas. By this time, in other words, Chicago was beginning to see a need, but the District hoped for that need to be met by the Synodical Conference.

This phenomenon gives pause—on the one hand, the District could be seen as shirking its responsibility to carry the Gospel into the black community in Chicago, and some will surely take this position. On the other hand, it could be praised for supporting the work of the Synodical Conference, while, at the same time, respecting the “division of labor” that had been adopted. It is certainly the case that the District, by 1921, directly

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3 Cf. Christopher F. Drewes, *Half a Century of Lutheranism among Our Colored People* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), 10ff.

4 A key event here is designated as the “Great Migration,” referring to the voluntary dispersal of African Americans living in southern states throughout, among other places, midwestern cities like Chicago. The phenomenon is sometimes divided into two phases, corresponding approximately to the two world wars. Numbers give a sense of the consequences for the NID, centered in Chicago: about 1 percent of the city’s population was African American in 1890; that number rises to 7 percent in 1930, 23 percent in 1960, and 40 percent in 1980. Today, it rests just below 30 percent. “Chicago,” Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago> (accessed November 12, 2023). Information originally drawn from the US Census Bureau.

carried out missions among other ethnic groups within its geographic boundary; Jewish missions and Assyrian missions are perhaps particularly of note, although one might also point to the support of work among Finnish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish, and Slovakian groups.<sup>5</sup> It is indisputable that black missions held a distinct place. This is clear simply from the fact that it always has its own separate heading among the reports documented in the convention proceedings, but the meaning of this distinction might be questioned since the others are documented under the category “foreign language missions,” whereas the black mission would have taken place in English. Noteworthy is the explicit case made by the mission director of the black mission, Pastor Nils Jules Bakke, for the District’s congregations supporting the black mission. He gave the following reasons already in 1912:<sup>6</sup>

- This mission work is also the work of the District because the District is part of the Synodical Conference.
- God has richly blessed this work already.
- This mission field is ripe for harvest.
- The Lord has placed the black man, “like poor Lazarus,” at our door.
- God has so richly blessed us.

Some will see the need to argue for support of the black mission as evidence of the racism within the District. Others may note the continued support of the black mission before and after this report was given. Since Bakke gave his report to a group already strongly supporting the black mission, he may also be seen as bolstering and encouraging an already active effort. Where there was sin, though, we see the basic principle of the church’s history at work: amid sin—in and through the lives of sinners—the Holy Spirit worked and works. Without a far more detailed historical study than we accomplish here, it is hard to say when such conditions had arisen as ought to have compelled the District to direct some of its limited resources into the local black community. But one may, in any case, acknowledge that with the arrival of the community, a need for Christian ministry and Christian mission arrived as well. This need was observed but only began to be met in the District with the arrival of the first Synodical Conference missionary to Chicago, Marmaduke Carter, in 1924.

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5 Some of this work may have been at the synodical rather than the district level. The report leaves that distinction at certain points unclear.

6 NID Proceedings, 1912.

## Missionary Marmaduke Nathaniel Carter

Marmaduke Nathaniel Carter was born in Virginia in 1881 to Rev. Nathaniel and Susan Carter. Initially trained as a Lutheran school teacher, Carter was eventually called into pastoral work as a missionary of the Synodical Council Mission Board, sent not to evangelize but to share the urgency of the work of black missions among the German LCMS congregations of the Midwest. Carter's German language fluency and depth of learning lent him credibility, and he was an ideal candidate for this work. In 1924, he was called by the same mission board to be the first missionary and pastor at the new St. Philip Lutheran Church in Chicago.

The work, which began in a YMCA, progressed quickly under Carter's leadership and God's blessing. It was only a few years before St. Philip was self-sustaining, and the congregation would eventually swell to more than one thousand members. Remarkably, Carter's members tended to be converts to the Lutheran Church rather than Lutherans who had moved to Chicago.

Carter was an important figure in the work of black ministry in the LCMS in the first half of the twentieth century, well beyond Chicago. His book, *Lutheran Customs*,<sup>7</sup> made an affirmative case for the liturgical practices of the Lutheran Church. He is also known for his argument that the black Lutheran has good cause to join in the celebration of the Reformation, even if, to some, it seems like a private celebration of certain Lutherans from a certain region of Germany. With efforts like this, Carter helped to bridge the gap between black and white Lutherans in his day. Carter served thirty-five years at St. Philip in Chicago and was called to be with his Lord in 1961.

## From the Arrival of Missionary Carter to the Decline in Financial Support of the Synodical Conference Mission

Alongside Carter's arrival in Chicago in 1924, District proceedings indicate that support of his work centered first around providing a building for the black mission. An appeal to the congregations of the District to provide funding for this seems to have been successful, although it appears that a building was only finally completed in 1927. At this point, the District shows some hesitation to hand ownership of the building over to the mission. It is certainly important at this juncture to note the structure of the mission: Missionary Carter was not a pastor of the District but of the Synodical Conference Mission Board, and the direct responsibility for his work rested accordingly not in the District but with the Synodical Conference Mission Board. The same would have held for his congregation—its "district" was not the NID but the Synodical Conference Mission Board.<sup>8</sup> The intention to provide a church building for the black mission seems beyond

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7 Marmaduke Nathaniel Carter, *Lutheran Customs: A Popular Presentation of Some Practices of the Lutheran Church* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1946).

8 The story around the affiliation of the many black congregations of the Synodical Conference Mission Board with the LCMS is an important one, but it had barely begun in the 1920s. In any case, attention to that history is the necessary foundation for any judgment about things like property-ownership decisions in individual districts.



doubt. The willingness to hand over ownership of that asset to an entity not beholden to the District (it would be decades before St. Philip’s status would change from “mission” to “congregation” and be received by the District) appears to have been tempered.<sup>9</sup>

In the years that immediately follow 1927, the District proceedings show a marked decline in support for the Synodical Conference Mission Board. It is difficult to tell a story from a few notes and annual financial reports, but the effect of the Great Depression (1929–1939) on the District is indisputable. Amid its rapid expansion, along with the rapid growth of the city of Chicago and its near suburbs,<sup>10</sup> the financial ruin that beset the nation was entirely evident in the church’s finances as well. In the years before 1928, the number of line items in the District’s budget increased year over year as new missions and ministries within the District and beyond its boundaries were supported. The total real support for black missions rose even as it became a smaller percentage of the total budget. But when the Depression reached the District, everything declined, so that by 1934, black missions support was barely a tenth of what it had been in 1925. Before the District would finally begin to flourish again, it would have to weather not only the Depression but also the life of a German community in the Midwest during the Second World War.

## Persian and Mexican Missions

Although the intentionality of the Synodical Conference led to black ministry dominating the early multiethnic work of the District, it was far from the only ministry of this type taking place. In the minutes of the thirteenth NID convention in 1927, new mission work among Persians (Missionary L. Pera) and Mexicans (Missionary Jose P. Fernandez) is noted. There, it is recommended that the Persian mission be handed over to the Synodical Foreign Tongues Mission Board (not to be confused with the *Synodical Conference Mission Board*) as soon as arrangements could be made. No equivalent recommendation was made regarding the new mission among Mexicans in Chicago. The 1930 convention minutes report the following statistics from Chicago:

- Mexican Mission—average attendance 30
- Latvian Mission—average attendance 70 (Rev. W. von Kuhlberg)
- Persian Mission—average attendance 25
- Polish Mission—average attendance 68 (Rev. T. Engel)
- Lithuanian Mission—average attendance 98 (Rev. J. Rozak)<sup>11</sup>

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9 NID Proceedings 1927, 94; see also 101. There is intentional discussion about handing over the chapel, but the conclusion is to first resolve the \$1,100 owed the District from its construction.

10 District convention proceedings in these years are filled with reports of new congregations being founded in the north and west suburbs. The growth is remarkable but doesn’t rely on a line item in the District’s budget.

11 NID Proceedings 1930, 91.

## Education

Although education plays a major role in the work of the District in its early years, it is not evident that any schools were opened in addition to or alongside the ethnic ministry and mission work already noted. Congregational schools were abundant but would presumably have served mostly children of the congregations. Treasurers reports do show support for both “Negro Students” and “Chinese Students.” In 1928, these come in the amounts, respectively, of \$20 and \$60 (equivalent to approximately \$340 and \$1,000 in 2022), but it is difficult to know how these funds were actually used.

## DEPRESSION AND WAR (1930–1943)

Beginning around 1925, a decline in the District budget is evident, which seems to portend the coming Great Depression (1929–1939). On the heels of the Depression came the Second World War, which was not as precarious for American Germans as was the First World War but was nevertheless disruptive to the work of the District. Little that can be called “new” occurs in this time. The financial strain hits on all sides, so that the District is generally able to support much less work than had previously been the case. Congregations with loans were unable to make payments in this time. Since the previous time had been such a time of growth, this was the situation of many congregations. This created a situation in which concerns were more of the existential sort. It is difficult to mark where the declining attention to multiethnic ministry occurs but easy to see afterward where it is again on the rise, as will be evident in the next chapter.

Already in 1939, the District convention proceedings deal with a question that will accompany the District in the decades to come—how to allot resources between “child mission” and “adult mission.”<sup>12</sup> Context clarifies that, in 1939, this is a question of mission schools and mission preaching stations, perhaps (although it is unclear) of the cost of missionary teachers vs. missionary pastors. Later, the question will develop to more generally embrace the question of proportions of funds directed to Lutheran schools and to new mission fields, the latter tending to be oriented around ethnic groups.

## MID-CENTURY (APPROXIMATELY 1944–1974)

The NID’s recovery out of the Great Recession was strong. For some time, the problem of resources shifted from not having enough money to not having enough church workers. Already in 1945, the Home Mission Board reports significant financial recovery, even as it fears a return of recession conditions. In response to this, they provide bonuses to the mission board employees, rather than increasing their salaries. The report also indicates rapid growth and the emerging independence of many mission stations from

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<sup>12</sup> NID Proceedings 1939, 71.

the mission board. The feared recession never emerges, and instead, the Home Mission Board reports a shortage of workers in 1950. There is significant opportunity for missions, including especially among the black communities in Chicago, where the District enjoys a good name. Two important mission projects in this time, which occasionally overlapped with one another, were based in Chinatown and nearby in the Ida B. Wells projects.

## Chinatown and the Ida B. Wells Projects

The mission in Chinatown, begun by Pastor Paul Meyer in 1943, grew around the work of Verna Schulz, a member at St. Paul Lutheran Church in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago. Although the records leave it unclear when the mission began, it is evident that Schulz worked effectively because the District began assuming financial responsibility for what was described as her work in fall of 1936.<sup>13</sup> Her work was among children there, and it seems that around it grew a preaching station, faith instruction toward baptism and confirmation, and a school.<sup>14</sup> Beginning at least by 1939, her work was supervised by Pastor Semman, representing the District's mission board.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time that Schulz was working in Chinatown, the Chicago Housing Authority was constructing the Ida B. Wells homes (1939–1941).<sup>16</sup> This New Deal housing project was built to house over 1,600 black families in intentional racial segregation.<sup>17</sup> Although it was initially seen as a success, it would eventually be plagued with such problems as would lead to the decision to demolish the homes, a decision carried out between 2002 and 2011.<sup>18</sup> The District also stepped in to work here right away in 1943. Pastor Paul Meyer also oversaw this, but onsite was Frank Colba, a day-school teacher. Andrew Schulze, who would be called through the Synodical Conference Mission Board in 1947 to serve in Chicago, related that when he arrived, the mission work had already been going on there for about ten years.<sup>19</sup>

By 1943, the District convention proceedings acknowledge the existence of the day school, as well as its success: it was full and had about one hundred children in the community on a wait list. Colba worked with students from Concordia Teachers College to run a Sunday school, and Pastor J. Mueller of Addison was conducting services. In all of this, Verna Schulz was a figure whose influence has, perhaps, been underrecognized.

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13 NID Proceedings 1937, 43.

14 NID Proceedings 1940, 37, 40.

15 NID Proceedings 1939, 66; Andrew Schulze, *Race Against Time: A History of Race Relations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from the Perspective of the Author's Involvement, 1920–1970* (Valparaiso: The Lutheran Human Relations Association of America, 1972), 47.

16 “Ida B. Wells Homes,” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida\\_B.\\_Wells\\_Homes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida_B._Wells_Homes) (accessed March 18, 2023).

17 “Chicago Housing Authority,” Encyclopedia of Chicago (website), <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/253.html> (accessed 18 March 2023).

18 “Ida B. Wells Homes” Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida\\_B.\\_Wells\\_Homes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida_B._Wells_Homes) (accessed March 18, 2023). See also the 1997 film documentary *Public Housing*, which gives a close look at the Ida B. Wells homes.

19 Schulze, *Race Against Time*, 46.

## Verna Schulz

Sometime before 1936, Verna Schulz, a laywoman from St. Paul's (Austin) Chicago, began mission work among children in Chinatown. This Sunday school served 35 children in 1937 and 130 by 1939.<sup>20</sup> Schulz originally carried the expenses personally but began to receive District support in 1937. This support was financial but also came as additional help. In 1939, the Sunday school on Sunday afternoon was followed by services, and instruction was also being held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Pastoral support for the mission varied through the years but was a constant focus for the NID. Also, in 1939, the Lutheran Women's Mission Endeavor pledged support for the construction of a chapel in Chinatown to support the work begun by Schulz.<sup>21</sup>

The 1940 convention again praises Schulz for her work and again shows the need for a more permanent pastor to serve the mission, but also demonstrates real fruit—one group is ready to be confirmed, and another is nearly ready to be baptized. Plans are being made to start a full Lutheran day school at the mission.

The year 1942 brought a significant modification to the Chinatown work, in that it became a base for work in the Ida B. Wells housing project erected in Chicago around that time, not too far to the north of Chinatown. The 1942 proceedings note 11 confirmations and 35 baptisms in the preceding year in the Chinatown ministry but also an attendance increase from 16 to 80 in the first six weeks of the project among the residents of Ida B. Wells.<sup>22</sup> Although it's not entirely clear what the initial relationship of the two projects was, it is evident that the work was conducted locally both in Chinatown and in the Ida B. Wells area—not together in a single location.

Verna Schulz was not, however, active only in Chinatown. The 1946 Home Mission Board reports her sharing “the message of life” with women and children and those in institutional settings, both in groups and in individual meetings.

The Home Mission Board report of 1948 tells of disappointment and tragedy in the work of the Chinatown and Ida B. Wells ministries. The building at Ida B. Wells was both expensive and inadequate, so the work was moved to the Chinatown building—but then the Chinatown building burned down. So both missions—the Chinatown Sunday school and the Ida B. Wells day school—were continued in a funeral parlor willing to rent the needed space. This 1948 report is the last one that mentions the mission in Chinatown.

Verna Schulz, however, reappears soon in connection with Missionary Rev. Andrew Schulz's work in the Ida B. Wells projects. Schulze arrived in Chicago in 1947, his salary shared equally by the District Home Mission Board and the Board of the Synodical Conference. In 1954, the Christ the King congregation at 37th and Lake Park Avenue (two blocks east of the Ida B. Wells projects) is described as having begun in a storefront school, which was likely the school mentioned above that had temporarily moved to Chi-

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20 NID Proceedings 1939, 63.

21 NID Proceedings 1939, 82.

22 NID Proceedings 1942, 58.

natown before the fire. Verna Schulz's assistance at Christ the King is cited as one of the reasons it overcame the conditions of that "difficult working area." The congregation of 301 baptized and 161 communicant members had "members of various colors and races," which may be an indication of continuation of the Chinatown ministry.<sup>23</sup>

Verna Schulz was called to be with her Lord in 1960. Her humble November 21 obituary reads as quoted here:

Verna M. Schulz, beloved wife of Herman; sister of Alwin and Mark Schultz. Employee of Northern Illinois District Mission board, Missouri Senate [*sic*]. Resting at funeral home, 3440 N. Central avenue, till 11:30 a.m. Wednesday. Lying in state at Lutheran Church of St. Paul, Iowa and Menard avenues, from 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 23, till time of service, 1:30 p.m. Interment Bethania. In lieu of flowers, memorials to your favorite Lutheran charity appreciated.<sup>24</sup>

## The District Assumes Responsibility for the Black Mission

An important aspect of the work of black ministry in the District is that, for about the first half of the twentieth century, the responsibility for this work formally rested with the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference. As noted already above, this explains both the large expense directed toward black missions even before such work was occurring in the District and the reticence on the part of the District to start its own black congregation. A clear change in this relationship is evident in 1948. In that year, the report of the NID Home Mission Board includes these lines:

At the request of the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference, your Board assumed responsibility for the supervision of Negro mission work within its geographic boundaries. Our Board is ready to cooperate with and seek the counsel of the General Board for Negro Missions in the calling of missionaries, the opening of new fields, and the problem of finances. The agreement we have reached with the General Board provides that the Synodical Conference agrees to pay half of the salary of our workers among the colored (two for the present) and aid us as much as possible in providing buildings for worship.<sup>25</sup>

Today, the NID in Chicago counts seven predominantly African American congregations in its ranks. Three of these were intentionally started as mission work in the black community: St. Philip, Christ the King, and Resurrection. The other four are originally German congregations that have "integrated" or transitioned with time: St. Paul (Dorchester), Zion, St. Stephen's, and St. Paul (Austin).

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23 NID Proceedings 1954, 75.

24 Obituary, *Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 1960.

25 NID Proceedings 1948, 50.

## Cultural Changes in the District

By way of transition, it is finally of note that a trend otherwise present in the culture and the church, including The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, could also be observed in the District. This trend was characterized by increased interest in “social” ministry in distinction from “Gospel” ministry, comparatively little hesitancy in questions of cooperation in ministry efforts, greater willingness to endure a battle internal to the church or District for the sake of addressing perceived societal and cultural demands, and a dramatically heightened attention to race.

None of this surprises. Chicago hosted the 1968 Democratic National Convention, a politically fraught event that occurred amid the highest of national tensions. The LCMS saw the election of J. A. O. Preus as synodical president in 1969. This election marked a shift in the current of the synod because Preus was able to address the Seminex-era liberal and historical-critical scholarship that had taken hold at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In connection with this came the formation of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), which formally broke with the LCMS and held some of its constituting meetings at the River Forest Concordia Teachers College campus and the adjacent Grace Lutheran Church.

# THE FOUNDING OF THE AELC TO THE PRESENT DAY

## Introduction and Main Emphasis

The 1974 convention of the District marks a turning point for the District and this study because of nationwide, synodical circumstances: Controversy at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had come to a head and led to the “walkout” of a majority of students and faculty to form Concordia Seminary in Exile, commonly known as Seminex. The movement, which represented a theologically liberal wing of the LCMS, had close ties to the Northern Illinois District and can be seen represented in the culturally progressive nature of a number of District resolutions of the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1976, a representation of that movement called ELiM—Evangelical Lutherans in Mission— broke entirely with the LCMS to form the AELC—the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches. Twelve years later, this church would join the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) in founding the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The AELC celebrated its founding on the Concordia River Forest campus.

The 1974 District convention seems partly consumed with the Seminex issue. Its resolutions deal repeatedly with reconciliation, limits of authority, and the status of graduates of the Seminex. It seems the energy that might have gone to multiethnic ministry efforts, in a moment of heated urgency, went instead to this situation. Already in 1976, however,

a new emphasis on ethnic ministry, especially Hispanic and black ministry, emerges as a sustained focus in the District.

## Mission

In 1976, the growth of the Hispanic mission field in the United States, and especially within the geographic boundaries of the Northern Illinois District, is acknowledged in two adopted resolutions. The first, 2-07, acknowledges the financial difficulties that inhibit some from entering the ministry and resolves to establish scholarships “for the training of professional church workers for Hispanic and other minority groups.” The second, 2-08, supports participation in a training program intended to better equip existing personnel to serve in Hispanic ministries.<sup>26</sup>

This attention to Hispanic ministries is expanded in 1978’s resolutions. Resolutions 3-13 and 3-14 are petitions to the LCMS and Concordia Publishing House to produce educational materials. Resolution 3-13 acknowledges cultural differences and asks for materials that “include the Black and Hispanic experience,” whereas 3-14 simply requests “Lutheran educational material in the Spanish language.”<sup>27</sup> Even more specifically related to the resolutions on 1976 is 5-10, which represents another front on the effort to provide church workers for the Hispanic and black communities. It recognizes the great need—and also the apparent “special problems”—that attend efforts of some who had entered the synodical colloquy program. With the resolution, the District added its voice to those calling for quick resolution of these issues.<sup>28</sup>

The 1980 and 1982 conventions confirm the further emphasis on Hispanic missions and ministry. In 1980, 3-08 and 3-09 renew the parallel interests of 1976 to train both church workers who belong to ethnic minorities and existing church workers to work among ethnic minorities.<sup>29</sup> Resolution 4-04 of 1980 also encourages the use of advertising in Hispanic media to draw attention to Hispanic work in the District.<sup>30</sup> Resolution 2-24 of 1982 indirectly provides some information referring to an already existing Hispanic Colloquy Center at Concordia River Forest, which is to be renamed the Lutheran Institute for Hispanic Ministries.<sup>31</sup>

## District Reports

With the late 1980s comes a new source of consolidated information on the activities of the District—the District reports submitted by the District president to the synodical convention for publication in the LCMS Convention Workbook. The first of these

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26 NID Proceedings 1976, 20.

27 NID Proceedings 1978, 26.

28 NID Proceedings 1978, 30.

29 NID Proceedings 1980, 24.

30 NID Proceedings 1980, 28.

31 NID Proceedings 1982, 22.

occurred in 1989, and this reporting method is still in use today. This resource provides a consistent source for the most significant activities of the District, but it is noticeably lacking in depth of detail. This is not a function of poor reporting but rather of its purpose. But the atomization of mission, ministry, and education “projects”—usually tied to congregational rather than District ownership—makes a different approach to this historical overview, under the circumstances, untenable. Our document could highlight multiethnic ministry successes in the District, or it could highlight failures, or it could seek a balance. But any of these three options fails because the conclusion is predetermined: successful multiethnic ministry, failure at multiethnic ministry, or “balance.” To predetermine the picture of the Northern Illinois District’s work presented here would fall short of the spirit of our task force’s mandate. On this account, we elect to provide somewhat less detail here. We will attempt to compensate by flagging those items, the further study of which would help to fill out the picture of the Northern Illinois District’s history of multiethnic mission, ministry, and education.

## The Content of the NID Reports to the Synod Conventions

In 1988, 1997, and 2002 the NID adopted revised mission statements. These are reproduced below for context.

### 1988:<sup>32</sup>

*The Northern Illinois District is a fellowship of LCMS congregations called to proclaim the Gospel of redemption. The District focuses its resources and also disciples and deploys its membership for ministry in order to reach those who do not know the Savior.*

*It is the goal of those who serve on behalf of the District to be good stewards of God’s gifts to them by being committed to*

- (1) equipping and encouraging congregations for their task of making and nurturing disciples,*
- (2) assisting congregations in the calling, care, and support of professional church workers, and*
- (3) identifying and pursuing mission and ministry opportunities on behalf of congregations which can better be achieved corporately.*

### 1997:<sup>33</sup>

*The Mission of the Northern Illinois District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is to extend and serve the church of Jesus Christ by providing support, encouragement, leadership, and resources to its congregations, leaders, and the church at large.*

The report then lists seven “critical targets” that “guide the work of the District, its boards, committees, and staff.”<sup>1</sup> *Developing New Missions and Ministries*

#### *2. Encouraging Inter-Congregational Support and Cooperation*

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<sup>32</sup> NID Proceedings 1988, 30.

<sup>33</sup> 1998 LCMS Convention Workbook, 114.



3. *Developing Leaders*
4. *Supporting Professional Workers, Congregations, and Schools*
5. *Maintaining Strategic Ministries*
6. *Supporting the Work of Synod*
7. *Providing Special Ministries on Behalf of Congregations*

**2002:**<sup>34</sup>

*The mission of the Northern Illinois District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: To work together as congregations and leaders to support, encourage, and assist each other in extending the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The report continues by listing four “critical targets and goals . . . adopted by the convention:”

1. **Congregational Ministries**—*That congregations have relevant ministries that seek, welcome, nurture, and incorporate all members of the congregation and community into their family of faith.*
2. **Leader Development**—*That congregations provide professional and lay leaders with training, support, and encouragement for the ministry of equipping God’s people.*
3. **Partnerships**—*That congregations foster partnerships at all levels (local, circuit, District, and synod) in order to expand the work of their congregation and the church at large.*
4. **Mission Multiplication**—*That congregations and circuits start and support new missions and ministries to reach unchurched people.*

Of note here is the trend away from ministries of the District toward District support of congregational ministries—not only financial—along with the encouragement of partnerships between congregations in such projects. This directly translates to fewer ministries that may be regarded as the output of the work of the District *as a whole*—in other words, the *District in convention*.

A few projects remain as genuine projects *of the District*. Following the reports published in the synodical workbooks, and looking for projects that are relevant to this task force’s mandate, we initially find the following:

- Reported in 1998, the restructuring of the District to create a Chicago circuit (NID East), thus uniting the vast majority of the multiethnic congregations with their neighboring congregations of more traditional LCMS membership makeup.
- Reported in 2001, the Ezra Housing Plan, in which the District joined.

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34 2004 LCMS Convention Workbook, 122.

- Also reported in 2001, a Wheatridge grant with the title “One Lord, One Faith, One God and Father of Us All,” aimed at “deal[ing] with the still-persistent evil of racism.” The report indicates the plan to train up to seven teams. The announcement about the project is repeated in the 2004 workbook.<sup>35</sup>

A new funding model is announced in 2007 called “Ablaze! Mission Outpost Grants.” The model changes from the subsidization of some congregations “year after year” to a grant application process, in which there must be “something new”: “What is crucial is that something new or additional be done to bring the Gospel to people and to bring people to hear the Gospel.”<sup>36</sup> This move underscores the trend already noted to shift ownership of projects from the district to the congregations, and noting it provides the necessary context for the task-force-relevant projects one reads in the NID synodical reports after 2007. In 2013, two mission plants are noted: “one Arabic, one Hispanic.”

- In 2019, mention is made of a school for missionaries at Iglesia Luterana San Pablo in Aurora. This project, which actually began in 2005, provides missionary training and has repeatedly sent men to study toward the pastoral ministry at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.<sup>37</sup>

## Convention Proceedings

In addition to this information that can be garnered from the NID reports in the LCMS Convention Workbooks, the resolutions adopted by the District in its convention proceedings provide a second source of information about the District’s work in recent decades. Since the availability of this resource, however, was inconsistent, the following cannot be understood as a comprehensive depiction, but only as a number of smaller stories that must be understood on their own terms.

- In 1988, Resolution 2-12<sup>38</sup> commended Hispanic missions to the District Mission Board. This should be seen positively as an endorsement of such work, rather than

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35 Additional information about the project is not contained in the resources that were available for this research but presumably could be obtained. They might provide additional insights into District-level efforts to be attentive to race-related sin in its midst.

36 2007 LCMS Convention Workbook, 122.

37 2019 LCMS Convention Workbook, 155; “Our History,” Iglesia San Pablo Aurora (website), <https://www.iglesiasanpabloaurora.org/nosotros?lang=en> (accessed June 20, 2023).

38 Resolution 2-12 is a prime example of the difficulty in interpreting the work of the District in convention. The resolution refers to an overture that was probably well intentioned but based in a misunderstanding of the District’s structures. The resolution brought by the floor committee was amended by the convention to include a *resolved* that emphasized the need for this work among “all people . . . including people of other cultures and races.” This seems to suggest concern about the focus of the overture on one culture and ethnicity in particular, but we are constantly aware of two issues that arise with this sort of speculation: (1) it is fundamentally uncertain, since there is no clear grounding for it in the sources, and (2) whatever may have been in the minds and hearts of the convention delegates, the resolution as printed is what the District adopted.

negatively as an effort to hand off the responsibility. Work in the Hispanic community most certainly continued in the years and decades following the 1988 convention.

- In 1991, Resolution 3-07 encourages “congregational support for immigrants and refugees.” This resolution commends this work to the congregations in three forms: through attention to the issue, through sponsorship via Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and through prayers and financial support for LCMS World Relief.
- Also in 1991, Resolution 3-02, “to encourage awareness and action in human care,” addresses a “lapse in public awareness of the pervasiveness of racism and its negative effects on society” and directs the Board for Ministry, the Board of Directors, and individual congregations to “address issues of racism.” In 1994, the Board for Ministry reported the following: “The issue of racism referred to us by the 1991 convention is in its infant stages of discussion prior to our setting a plan of action.” The action appears to culminate in the observance of October 1995 as “Human Care Month” along with a public policy symposium co-hosted with “Lutheran Child and Family Services, Lutheran Home and Service for the Aged, Concordia University and the Center for Urban Ministries, the Board for Ministry, and the congregations of the English District in northern Illinois.”
- In its 1994 convention report, the Board for Missions described its nascent effort to engage in Jewish missions, with the aim of “formulating a Messianic Lutheran congregation within the perimeter of the Northern Illinois District.”
- In 2006, two resolutions indicate attention to multiethnic ministry in the District. The first, 3-05, “that ministry in the NID overcome language barriers that hinder the communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” encouraged pastors to learn new languages for ministry and congregations to teach English as a second language classes.<sup>39</sup> The second, 3-07, “Fulfilling God’s Mission in a Multi-Cultural World,” has one particularly noteworthy *resolved*. In it, the congregations of the District are admonished to “recognize the sin of racism, both personal and institutional.”<sup>40</sup> But it also acknowledges and affirms the work of the “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism” task force, which, according to the preceding paragraph, provided “awareness, resources, training and support for developing multicultural and multiracial ministries

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39 NID Proceedings 2006, 74.

40 NID Proceedings 2006, 37. (An amendment that would have struck the words “both personal and institutional” was not accepted by the convention. Another, that would have exchanged the term “racism” for “race prejudice,” was likewise not adopted by the convention.)

in [NID] congregations.”<sup>41</sup> This is probably a reference to the Wheatridge grant reported on in 2001 and 2004. The work of this task force is not pursued further in this study document but may prove worthy of further study by those interested in the history of the District’s work in multiethnic communities.

- In 2009, Resolution 2-01A concluded the work of the “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism” task force, commending Dr. William Griffin and Dr. Donald Gourlay, who led it, and commending the resources it produced (besides synodical resources on ministry and mission amid challenges created by racial and ethnic diversity) to the District.<sup>42</sup> This resolution includes repentance for “any and all failures on our part as individuals or as congregations to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of racial or ethnic differences.” An amendment was proposed that would have stricken the forward-looking *resolved* paragraphs of this resolution and restricted it to an expression of gratitude for the task force’s work, but it was rejected by the convention by a vote of 89 (yes) to 185 (no).

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41 NID Proceedings 2006, 76.

42 NID Proceedings 2009, 42-43.

# MUCH REMAINS UNTOLD

A task of the sort set forth for this group is never completed. Difficult decisions had to be made in the drafting of this document. Many stories had to be left untold. For some, this was the case because they have already been told in other places. For others, the available materials tell only an incomplete story. For still others, it may have been possible to tell a fuller story, but time and financial resources were not available to draw the sources together that would have been necessary to accomplish that. Some will observe that we did not perform interviews as a part of this study. This is doubtless one of the greatest weaknesses of this report. But it would also have presented one of the greatest challenges to the integrity of the report because of the expertise required to carry out such an effort effectively. Even simply regarding the question of who to interview would have proved challenging to the success of the task.

In the following, we wish simply to draw attention to some stories that may be worth telling—to some of the history of the District that, after this report is written, remains in the dark. These stories deserve more light, either because they are a sign of the wonderful work of God and give us cause to rejoice or because they reveal the sin of the men and women who went before us, which, in turn, gives us pause to consider our own sin and repent. In either case, it is our hope that the material presented above provides some context to those who might consider investigating such things as might belong in the following list:

- The work of Grace Christian Academy in Little Village
- The school for missionaries at Iglesia Luterana San Pablo in Aurora
- The Wheatridge Foundation “One Lord, One Faith, One God and Father of Us All” grant
- Any of the early ethnic ministries in the District: Assyrian, Hispanic, or Jewish
- Each of the District’s Lutheran high schools:
  - Luther North (1909–2017)
  - Luther South (1951–2014)
  - Walther Lutheran (1954–)
  - Rockford Lutheran (1965–)
  - Valley Lutheran (1974–1991)
- Concordia University
  - Student involvement in the Ida B. Wells and Chinatown missions
  - The Hispanic Colloquy Center / Lutheran Institute for Hispanic MinistriesImmanuel Chicago and the decision to stay on site at the Medical Campus
- The District’s expansive institutional ministry in the twentieth century

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